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CĂLIN IN M. EMINESCU'S POETRY AND IN ROMANIAN FOLKLORE
(some linguistic observations)

Călin (*Fairy Tale Pages*)[1] a poem written by M. Eminescu (1850–1889), stands out in the context of his creative legacy and is notable from not a single point of view. In the first place, the poem is a reminiscence of the Romanian folk motifs. Secondly, in his „mythical" inner qualities the hero of the poem can be considered partly close to the central character of the romantic poem *Luceafărul* (1883, May 15/27)[2] telling about the love of an immortal spirit to an earthly beautiful woman. The latter combined various motifs of Eminescu's philosophical lyrics. Finally, the name of the magic character, Călin[3], seems to be in congruence with the female name, Călina, bestowed upon the heroine of the folk tale *Who is the most beautiful*? (the first publication in 1892). Neither of these names has been given a suitable explanation.

The plot outline for a tale in prose conceived by Eminescu is also well known as *Călin nebunul* (*Călin the crazy*, 1875)[4]. Following his brothers, the hero of the tale goes in a quest to find his wife. He steals fire from the hearth of twelve dragons, sneaks into the bed-room of the Red King's daughter and, finding her sleeping, puts a ring on her finger. After a series of deadly fights with the dragons he with three princesses get to a meeting point to see his brothers. The brothers take the princesses from him and cut off his feet. Feetless Călin comes across an armless prince and together they succeed in prevailing over the mother of the dragons, in finding the water of life and thus returning themselves their limbs. In the Red King's palace they learn that the second daughter of the king is going to get married off to the alleged champion of the dragons. By showing the dragons' tongues cut off by him, the hero denounces the imposter, and the king's daughter

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1 See Eminescu 1958, pp. 61–69.

2 *Ibidem*, pp. 130–146.

3 This anthroponym is very rare and seems to be of folkloric very often origin; as a male name it doesn't occur but can be found as a family name (e.g., Liviu Călin).

4 G. Călinescu reports that the tale about Călin could have been heard by Eminescu from a young nun Zanaida in a small nunnery Agafton in the vicinity of Botoşani, when he visited his aunt Fevronia Juraşcu (see Călinescu 1964, p. 201). For the plot of the tale, see Călinescu 1969, pp. 252–253.

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marries his newly sworn brother. Then Călin eventually returns home. On his way back he recognizes his son in a village shepherd-boy whose mother has been forced by Călin's brothers to see to hen coop. So justice prevails, and the crafty brothers of Călin get a sever punishment for their misdeeds.

The poetic character whose name is mentioned only in the title of the poem *Călin*... (November 1, 1876) is a romantic image rather than a fairy-tale character[5]: one of the epithets referring to him is Romanian word *Zburătorul* that means *a flying demon*, the other is *voinicul* (that is '*a warrior*', '*a knight*'). Quite real, if romantic, is a night landscape, as well as the description of the princess's bedroom into which the hero gets every night without having any hindrance of a fairy-tale type. The princess is dying of love to him, therefore she elopes from the palace and gives birth to a son without anyone knowing about it. In the concluding part of the poem in the autumn forest our hero meets a village shepherd-boy whose name is Călin and, as his mother says, this is also the name of his father. In a peasant's hut the hero finds his sweetheart and this meeting marks their ultimate reunion. The last part of the poem is a sumptuous wedding with a feast at which insects organize their wedding ceremony too.

Only the name is common for the two above-mentioned stories. In *Luceafărul* the rival of Zburătorul[6], the immortal hero who indeed lost his infernal features of a folklore character, is a „cupbearer" Cătălin. He eventually becomes the one whom the heroine of this romantic poem, Cătălina, chooses, thus betraying her too high ideal. It is no coincidence that the both names are made so close, so similar, thus somewhat making the image of the heroine of *Luceafărul* (Marian, Şerban 2000, p. 57) that appears to be all too general, more earth-bound. Can we suppose then that the demon or knight (warrior) of the poem *Călin*, let alone his son, in this case could have been given the name resembling the name of this heroine?

The above-mentioned fairy tale *Who is the most beautiful*? (Sevastos 1892; cf. Şăineanu 1978, pp. 494–495)[7] in which a similar name is to be found was recorded in Moldova. Every day a beauty asks a magical mirror who is the fairest woman of all in the land until one day the mirror replies that Călina, her own daughter, is seven times as beautiful as her mother. A servant, who is ordered to take Călina to the woods and kill her there, takes pity on her. She finds herself with robbers who begin taking care of her. However, the mother learns that Călina's being alive and – disguised as a fortune-teller – comes to her and gives Călina a

[5] According to G. C. Nicolescu, *Călin* is a „[...] song creatively transformed into the form of folkloristic popular narrative, a song abounding in passionate love and full on the joy of life, embracing simultaneously everything most magical, warmest, most human and purest" (see Nicolescu 1965, p. 322).

[6] See: *Zburătorul*, i.e. Latin 'volatilis' (= flying), the people believe that „this ghost is a very attractive young man who nightly breaks into the bedrooms of young girls, especially newly-weds, and who is not to be seen however hard people might try to track him down" (Cantemir 2007, p. 322). This personification correlates with a typical Turkic folklore female character *Gelin*, who lives his grave to kill young men (see below).

[7] The Romanian fairy tale is typologically close to a well-known story about „The Sleeping Beauty". Eminescu might have been unaware of it though he lived in Jassy (in 1874–1876).

ring. The girl puts it on her finger and falls dead. On returning home the robbers take the ring off her finger and the girl comes alive again. The mother takes several attempts to kill the daughter, first with the help of a poisoned dress and then with a hairpin. Having failed to find the hairpin, the robbers bury her in a golden coffin hung between two maple-trees. There she is found by a prince who happens to be hunting in these woods, he falls in love with her and takes her body to his palace. The queen insists on burying Călina, but before starting the ceremony they comb her hair. The hairpin is brushed off (is removed), the girl comes to life and the happy prince marries her. Now her mother pretends to be a midwife, she receives a new-born baby of her daughter into her hands, kills it and puts all the blame on Călina. Finally, Călina is executed by order of the king and the envious mother thus becomes the fairest woman of all.

The name of the heroine of this fairy-tale character as well as the related male name is unlikely to have motivation in the eyes of Romanian speaking people. The Romanian word Călin(a) seems to be of Turkic origin, compare: old Turkic *gelin* 'bride, new-wed, daughter-in-law', medieval Turkic *kälin*, ottoman *gälin*, kazak *kelin*, Tatar *kilə* 'idem' (Räsänen 1969, p. 250; Наделяев и др. 1969)[8] In the Balkans the corresponding forms are Albanian (archaic) *gjelinë f.* 'daughter-in-law' (Dizdari 2006, p. 302); Bulgarian (dialectal) *гелѝна* f. 'bride, young wife' (Grannes *et alii*, p. 48); compare also Bulgarian microtoponyms *Гелин йолу* – the old road between Gabrovo and Svishtov, *Гелин чукуру* – an elevation (according to tradition, the burial place of the killed bride) (Ковачев 1961, p. 157). The Turkic forms have the verbal stem *gel-* 'to come, to arrive', Modern Turkic *gelmek id*. Thus *gelin* (imperativ, 2[d] person, sing.) is literally, 'come here!' (cf. *gelen* 'the one who has come')[9].

As it is easily seen, the meaning *bride, newly-wed* agrees very well with the role of the heroine of the Moldavian fairy-tale. The original meaning of the word ('*coming, arriving*')[10] exceptionally fits the folklore character of Romanian *Zburătorul*, who breaks in the privacy of girls' bedrooms. This male personification correlates with a typical in Turkic folklore character Gelin – she is a female demon, who seduces young men and comes out of grave to kill them (Öztürk 2009, p. 403[11]). In Romanian there is no marked appellative *călin. If we agree with the Turkic origin of the personal name *Călin*(*a*) *m*. (*f*.), we should keep in mind the correlation between Oguz *g-* and Kypchak *k-* in inlaut. This fact enables us to believe that the most plausible origin of the Romanian form lies in the Kuman language which is a language of Kipchak type[12]. The presence of the

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[8] The word is included into Mahmud Kashgari's *Dictionary of Turkic idioms* (1072–1074) (see Brockelman 1928).

[9] Compare Rumanian (in folklore) ghélai 'let us go! come here!' (< turkic *gel-*), *gheál* 'idem' (see MDA, pp. 989.

[10] I.e. 'new-coming' in the family of husband.

[11] The author is grateful to A. H. Girfanova for clarifying this issue.

[12] The following grammatical forms of the stem *gel-* / *kel-* are recorded in *Codex Cumanicus* (1294, the existing copy dates around 1330): *keliyrir* 'venit', *keji* (= *kelejir* 'idem'), *keluyorler*

Kumans in Dacia-Romanian areas is a widely accepted fact and doesn't need any additional proofs. Moreover, quite obvious is that the female name Călina, which is formally a derivative, must have actually preceded the appearance of the male form Călin according the historical grammar of the language (in the Turkic languages the grammatical category of gender is not overtly marked).

In the context of Eminescu's poetic images another association line cannot be overlooked as it might be even the most important if we bear in mind that the home village of the Eminovici family is *Călineşti* (county of Suceava, Moldova region). Indeed, the stem of the toponym purely happens to coincide with that of the anthroponyms (proper names) discussed. They are in fact homophones having different semantic motivation and traced back to different origins – Slavonic and Turcik. To note is that the authors of the Dictionary of Toponyms „Muntenia" give the toponym *Călin* (an elevation near the village of Deal, commune Dănicei, region of Vâlcea) an alternative etymology explaining it through *Călin* (snowball tree) or *Călin* (a proper name) (DTRM, p. 41).

Homophonic to the folklore name Romanian *călin m*. 'arrowwod, snowball tree, viburnum (Latin *Viburnum opulus*)' is a variant of *călină f. id.* (fruit) that has its roots in Bulgarian *калина* idem.[13]. Understandably, this word may well correspond to the meaning of the Călineşti toponyms, which are to be met with not only in Moldova, but also in Muntenia (totaling about 20 names, including compounds like *Călineşti-Slătineancă*) along with *Călinească* (9 occurrences), *Călinescu* (2 place names), Călină (8 toponyms) (DTRM, pp. 41–42).

There is no reason at all to suppose that Eminescu made a deliberate choice as well as conscious use of the name Călin. Nor could he have ever pondered seriously about its etymology or semantics. However, the presented observations on the issue of the word's etymology and semantics, if justified, can reveal an amazing power of Eminescu's poetic intuition. Moreover, it seems right to conclude that the name Călin could be of Turkic origin.

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[13] DER, no. 1335.

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Abstract

Călin is the name of the character of the unfinished tale in prose conceived by Mihai Eminescu (1850–1889) „Călin the crazy" (1875) and also of his poem „Călin (Fairy Tales Pages)" (November 1, 1876). In Romanian folklore we may find as well the female equivalent of this name. Călina is the heroine of the folk tale from Moldova „Who is the most beautiful?" (the first publication in 1892). It is a variety of the story of the sleeping beauty (the beautiful bride), who was defamed and perished out of envy. The hero of the Eminescu's poem (Călin) incarnates the popular idea of the so-called *Zburătorul* that means a flying demon – a very attractive young man who nightly breaks into the bedrooms of young girls, especially newly-weds. This personification correlates with a typical Turkic folklore female character Gelin, who seduces young men and leaves her grave to kill them.

The Romanian name Călin(a) seems to be of Turkic origin. Let's compare: Old Turkic gelin 'bride, new-wed, daughter-in-law', Medieval Turkic kälin, Ottoman gälin etc. The corresponding forms are marked in the Balkan languages such as Albanian (archaic) gjelinë f. 'daughter-in-law'; Bulgarian (dialectal) гелѝна f. 'bride, young wife'. The Turkic forms have the verbal stem gel- 'to come, to arrive'.

If we agree with the Turkic origin of the personal name Călin(a) m. (f.), we should keep in mind the correlation between Oguz g- and Kypchak k- in inlaut. This fact enables us to believe that the most plausible origin of the Romanian form lies in the Kuman language which is a *language of Kypchak type.*

Keywords: *Romanian folklore, Eminescu, Călin, Balkan languages, the word's origin.*

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